Heart of the year of prayer: Sunday is the greatest day of the week and the heart of the Church's liturgical year. Each week we celebrate God's love in saving us by the obedient death and glorious resurrection of Christ. Sunday is the Lord's day, when God calls his people together to worship him and to renew the baptismal covenant: once again we promise to put sin out of our lives and to live with Christ for God.

Day for celebration. When a special celebration touches the prayer life of the whole parish, it is fitting to hold this celebration within the Lord's day liturgy. Thus, Sunday is the preferred day for celebrating baptism and ordinations, and for dedicating a church to God's worship.

Saturday evening: The Catholic Church continues the Jewish practice of beginning important feasts the night before: the Easter vigil and Christmas Eve are examples of this custom. The first celebration of the Lord's day begins in the evening hours of Saturday and is always celebrated with the Solemnity of Sunday.

Foretaste of heaven: On Sunday we remember and share in the Lord's dying and rising; it is also a time to look forward to his coming in glory, and to our eating and drinking with him at the heavenly banquet. Those who eat this bread and drink this cup now, he promises, will have eternal life with him.

Sunday needs our attention.

In our home. What does Sunday mean for us? How do we prepare for it? How do we celebrate it?

In our community. How do we get ready for the Lord's day? How well do we celebrate it? How do we follow it up? What have we done in the past year to understand it and celebrate it better?

Living out the Sunday liturgy: Liturgy and life must always go together:

Sunday leads to life. Our Sunday worship makes us more open to hear God's word and prepared to do his will; to share this word with others; to prove our love for God by loving and serving others. Sunday is the beginning of another week with the Lord.

Life leads to Sunday. During the week, we live out our vocation. We pray for our daily bread; we carry our daily cross with Christ. We seek to know and do God's will. With the help of the Spirit, we live for the Lord. On Sunday we bring all this to him as our gift.

Blessed are you, Lord our God:
you have chosen us as your people,
to praise you by word and deed.

We thank you for calling us together each week,
for teaching us with your saving words,
for nourishing us with your food from heaven.
Accept our praise and our thanksgiving.
Send us forth to do your work,
and keep us always in your love.

Father, we give you glory
through Jesus Christ your Son
in union with your Holy Spirit.
Glory to you! Amen! Alleluia!

"We hold our common assembly on Sunday because it is the first day of the week, the day on which God put darkness and chaos to flight and created the world, and because on that same day our Saviour Jesus Christ rose from the dead. For he was crucified on Friday and on Sunday he appeared to his to his apostles and disciples and taught them the things that we have passed on for your consideration" (Justin Martyr, *First Apology* [c.155 A.D.], chap. 67).

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Sunday is the Lord's Day

A special day for God's people

Keeping the Lord's day

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Edited by the National Liturgy Office

Story of Sunday

A day for the Lord. The Jewish people kept the seventh and final day of the week – the Sabbath, our Saturday – as a holy day. It was a day to rest from work and to worship God.

Jesus and the Apostles. The Gospels emphasize that Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week – our Sunday. St. Luke also describes Pentecost as a Sunday. From the time of the Apostles, Sunday is the day when Christians assemble for worship and prayer, especially in the Eucharist: Sunday is the day when we recognize Christ in the breaking of bread.

Early Church. First generations of Christians called Sunday "the first day of the week" and "the Lord's day" and even the "eighth day" seeing it as the day of the new creation. The Fathers of the Church emphasized Sunday as a day to turn away from sin and the works of Satan and to renew our baptismal promise to live with Christ for God.

Mistaken emphases. Christians have sometimes forgotten the true meaning of Sunday. When people had an excessive fear of the Lord Jesus, they simply saw the Sunday as a day of obligation. Even today, many see it mainly as a day free of work; others try to replace the Sunday celebration with various themes that have little to do with a day of the Lord.

A fuller understanding. The Second Vatican Council corrected some of these abuses. For us, Sunday is the Lord's day, when believers rededicate their lives to the Father through Jesus. As Christians give the day to worship of God, they also want to use it for works of love and mercy, especially visiting the sick and helping people in need.

Meaning of Sunday

Day of the Lord. From the time of the Apostles, the Christian Church has come together on the first day of the week, the day of the Lord's rising from the dead. We recognize him in the breaking of bread and praise our Father in heaven.

Day of assembly. God calls us together to hear his word, to praise his name, to thank him for creating the world and saving us in Christ, and to be nourished with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. In our Sunday gatherings, our Father recognizes his Church present and active in the world.

Day of praise and prayer. On Sunday we join Christ in singing praise and thanks to his Father. In the name of all creation we give God glory; as his people we plead for the welfare and salvation of all humanity.

Day of the word. God himself speaks when his word is proclaimed to us during the Mass. We need to prepare ourselves by prayer and by reading over the texts before the Sunday celebration, and to reflect on them during the following week. We pray for grace to let his word touch our hearts and change our lives.

Day of light and joy. Christ is the light of the world, and he calls us to be and reflect this light. We are called to let our good deeds shine before other people, so that they may be led to give glory to the Father. Joy is the gift of God's Spirit, given to all who seek to do the will of the Father.

Day of rest. On the Lord's day, we take a rest from our usual daily tasks and use this time to praise God, to help others – and to relax. We play and rest, as we pray and worship: in God's sight, and with his blessing.

Sunday Eucharist

Day for Eucharist. Sunday is the day when every Christian community comes together to give thanks to God for his saving gift in Christ. Nothing should keep us from taking our full and active part in this celebration of faith and love, in union with God's people here and in every part of the world, and with his Church in eternity.

On the Lord's day we want to offer our best to the Father. For this reason, our Sunday celebration must sum up our week of service, joy, suffering, prayer and praise, and lead us to a new week of following Christ, of making God's kingdom come among us.

Preparing for Sunday. We may prepare for the Sunday Eucharist in many ways: by giving thanks frequently to the Father, who calls us in Christ; by admitting that we are sinners in need of God's help; by praying for the Church and the world. We prepare by reading over the readings and prayers ahead of time. We may come early and spend a few moments in quiet prayer.

Morning and evening prayer. In our day, the believing community is beginning to recognize once more the importance of morning and evening prayer on the Day of the Lord. The complete celebration of Sunday begins with the community's morning prayer and ends with evening prayer by God's people.

Sunday in our home: Those who believe in Christ want to make his day special in their family life. As well as taking an active part in their community worship, they will mark the Lord's day by special times of prayer, Scripture reading and good works. This is also a day to "recreate" ourselves for God's service.